

Melbourne Mandolin Orchestra

featuring **Slava Grigoryan**



Concerto for guitar 8'24" Sylvius Leopold Weiss 1686-1750

- 1** Largo 1'42"
 - 2** Allegro 0'43"
 - 3** Allegro Molto 2'44"
 - 4** Largo 1'35"
 - 5** Presto 1'38"
- Guitar: Slava Grigoryan

6 A Celebration 8'18" Robert Schulz 1950-
Cello: Karla Drazenovic

7 Song of the Japanese autumn 12'02" Yasuo Kuwahara 1946-
Solo mandolin: Michelle Wright

Concertino for mandola 7'14" Fred Witt 1922-

- 8** Allegro 1'54"
 - 9** Andante 3'02"
 - 10** Allegro 2'17"
- Mandola: Kurt Jensen

Summertrip 13'19" Jurgen Klose 1946-

- 11** Rondo 5'10"
- 12** Ostinato 3'52"
- 13** Tatro 4'16"

Tanz suite 10'31" Willi Althoff 1906-1971

- 14** Slow Foxtrot 3'02"
- 15** Slow Waltz 3'03"
- 16** Foxtrot 4'25"

Recorded at Xavier College Chapel, Melbourne
Digital recording and editing: Martin Wright
(assisted by Vaughan McAlley and Michael England)
Post-production music supervisor: Michelle Wright
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**MELBOURNE
MANDOLIN
ORCHESTRA**

conducted by
Fred Witt

featured soloists:



guitar **Slava Grigoryan**
and

cello **Karla Drazenovic**
mandola **Kurt Jensen**

mandolin **Michelle Wright**

The mandolin evolved from the lute family in the 17th century. The word “mandolin” means “almond” in Italian which is descriptive of the small treble lute of that time. Today the word mandolin refers most commonly to the Neapolitan instrument which evolved in the mid 18th century. With steel strings instead of its ancestor's gut strings, and plucked with a plectrum, the modern mandolin has a gentle but immediate sound. It is usually plucked and played using tremolando technique producing a continuous sound. Modern composers exploit the range of techniques from finger style to tremolo to produce specific effects. The Melbourne Mandolin Orchestra plays round back mandolins of the Italian style and classical guitars.

In the 18th century, the mandolin flourished as a solo instrument for concerti, was included in many chamber works and was popular in opera. Many of these works written for wealthy patrons can be found in the libraries and museums of Europe. The terror of the French Revolution brought to an abrupt end the hey-day of mandolin performance and publishing in France. Royal patronage in Austria continued the work of Hoffman who composed for the mandolin and later in the century Mozart, Beethoven and Hummel wrote for the instrument.

The 19th century saw the mandolin become the instrument of the people. It became an important folk instrument and was played in university orchestras and the workingmen's orchestras of the Naturfreund movement. The older repertoire consisted of

arrangements of popular works, operas and ballets.

The mandolin orchestra with mandolins I and II, mandolas, mandocello and guitar and double bass was not formed until the latter half of the 19th century. Mandolins and mandolas take the soprano and alto range respectively, the guitars, mandocello and double bass play the deeper voices. In the 20th century, composers use the mandolin orchestra as a means for the expression of serious original works particularly in Germany, Japan and in a smaller way, Australia. In its early years, the Melbourne Mandolin Orchestra commissioned works from George Tibbetts, Eric Austin Phillips and Robert Schulz. George Dreyfus, Eric Gross and Ann Carr Boyd have composed for other Australian and German ensembles.

Concerto in D minor

Sylvius Leopold Weiss was the most famous lutenist of his time. Seigfried Behrend (1933-90), one of the foremost German guitarists, was so keen to enrich the virtuoso guitar repertoire that he arranged this lute concerto for solo guitar and mandolin orchestra.

Using the Italian concerto form of the late baroque, the work commences with two short movements that are an exploration of the harmonic and textural possibilities of the solo instrument and the ensemble. The Largo features the soloist playing slow legato arpeggios. The Allegro introduces a discourse between the orchestra and the soloist with rapid arpeggios. The Presto begins the

substantial movements of the work that are designed to show off the virtuosity of the solo performer.

The transcription from lute to guitar poses many problems for the soloist. The loss of the top string from the lute forces the guitarist to play mostly in high positions and taxes the left hand technique. Slava Grigoryan overcomes these performing difficulties to play this baroque pearl with ease and charm.

A Celebration

This piece was commissioned for the first performance of the Australian Mandolin Orchestra in Sydney in 1990. A solo cello was specifically requested. Robert Schulz, a Perth based guitarist, music teacher and composer took as his inspiration the wild celebrations that followed the tearing down of the wall dividing East and West Berlin.

The scene is firmly set in East Berlin by the style of music which is reminiscent of Kurt Weill's compositions. A military theme announces the presence of soldiers marching along Unten Den Linden. After a concert a cellist plays alone on the steps of a concert hall in the street. A 5/4 section introduces a tipsy resident of the East who weaves his way towards the West where he becomes involved in the celebrations.

The solo cello part demands lyrical playing of recitatives, humour and virtuosity.

Song of the Japanese Autumn

Yasuo Kuwahara is one of the leading composers, performers and conductors of mandolin music in Japan. His compositions

are known and well regarded throughout the modern music world in Japan although the mainstream of mandolin orchestras find his work too avant garde for their performance. However the orchestras he directs concentrate on the definitive performance of his compositions. Kuwahara also writes for film and television.

This piece was composed in Spain in 1990 and a very rough copy was presented to the Melbourne Mandolin Orchestra when he visited Australia for a series of concerts on his way home to Japan. After much deciphering, reasonable parts were produced and within a year the orchestra had popularised the work in Japan and then Europe where the MMO played it in the Eupen competition. It is a most attractive piece of music combining traditional Japanese rhythms, dramatic dynamics and some beautiful melodies.

Two themes dominate. One slow and nostalgic, a possible farewell to summer, begins and ends the work. It is developed in the central section and in the lovely solo cadenza. An Allegro introduces the wild winds capable of playful damage and the violent velocity of the typhoon.

Concertino for Mandola

This work was inspired by the energetic and virtuosic playing of Kurt Jensen. The first movement was composed over the now legendary bottle of whisky shared between Kurt and Fred Witt soon after their first meeting. But some of the ideas had been worked over earlier by Fred and his son Michael, especially in the second movement

which was originally envisaged as a dialogue between double bass and mandolin orchestra. The mandola plays the deeper slower voice urged on by the impatient mandolins. However the tables are turned in the third movement and a lively mandola leads in the mandolins in the Allegro. This piece won first prize at Eupen for Fred Witt as composer and Kurt Jensen as soloist.

Summertrip

Jurgen Klose is a self taught musician (guitar and piano) who began by playing rock 'n' roll. At nineteen, he became involved in the mandolin orchestra movement after learning mandolin from Gerhard Vogt. He later became the conductor of the Mandolin and Guitar Orchestra Naturfreund Schweinfurt. He first composed at the age of ten, but Summertrip, written in 1991, has struck a note of interest among his contemporaries and has won him a prestigious award for composition.

Summertrip combines tensions between harmonies, minimalist rhythmic variations and songlike melodies with pop, bossa nova, jazz and blues overtones.

The movements entitled Rondo, Ostinato and Tatro are composed in Rondo form and evoke the basic moods of a summer holiday. The Rondo depicts the escape from the city through the hell of the busy traffic on the first day of the summer holidays as all Germany escapes the cities for relaxing retreats in the rest of Europe.

The Ostinato abandons the discords and staccato rhythms of the previous movement and using folk themes evokes the relaxation

and peace of the countryside. It has one basic theme which recurs persistently and underscores the basic structure of the movement.

The third movement Tatro is based on Polish folk themes.

Tanz Suite

Willi Althoff was a great influence in the modern mandolin movement in Germany. He was a pupil of Theodore Ritter and in turn became the teacher of Fred Witt.

While his achievements as a performer and conductor have been acknowledged, many of his compositions have been neglected, but recently some charming pieces have been played by German soloists. Althoff recognised the versatility of the mandolin and composed both popular and serious works. Through the latter he attempted to raise the status of the mandolin orchestra to that of a symphony orchestra yet the pieces remain rarely performed curiosities.

This little suite of dances is one of the more popular works. Three pieces make up the suite; a Slow Foxtrot, a Slow Waltz and a Foxtrot.

Melbourne Mandolin Orchestra

was formed in 1967 by Peter Evans and Josef Ruecker. Their aim was "to develop and maintain a mandolin orchestra in Melbourne". As well as performing regularly, the group organises summer schools, trips from overseas groups, trains new players, holds musical workshops and master classes and commissions music. Performance however, remains the orchestra's priority. It has performed in Victorian concert venues and in many festivals including Adelaide and Melbourne. The orchestra has also recorded live concerts for the ABC. In 1991 the orchestra toured Japan and in Europe 1993, the MMO won all prizes at the First International Mandolin Competition held in Eupen, Belgium. In 1995 the orchestra plans to perform in Italy and Switzerland.

Fred Witt is among the most respected conductors, composers and performers of plucked music in Germany. Born in Dortmund 1922, he learnt guitar, mandolin, zither and piano accordion. His teachers were Theodore Ritter and Willi Althoff. Although his musical education was interrupted by war, he attended the University in Dortmund and there studied guitar, accordion and singing. He has directed some of the best mandolin orchestras in Germany; Nord-Rhein



Westfallen, Neuenhain, Hessen State Mandolin Orchestra and the Bayer-Leverkuesen Mandolin Orchestra, the Zither Orchestra-Bochum Langen Dreer and many choirs. In Melbourne he conducts the German Male Choir Arion and the German mixed choir. He has numerous awards for composition, and his works are popular world-wide. His first tour was in 1977 with the Deutsches Zupforchester. He soon returned to lead the Summer Schools of the Federation of Mandolin Ensembles in 1978, 1979, 1981 and 1990. He has conducted the Melbourne Mandolin Orchestra since 1990 and the combination of an exciting conductor and an enthusiastic orchestra has brought the orchestra's performances to new heights.

Michelle Wright, Concertmaster. Twenty-five years old, Michelle began playing the mandolin in primary school under the tuition of Stephen Morey and played in a small youth orchestra which Stephen directed. Michelle joined the Melbourne Mandolin Orchestra at fourteen and became leader when she was eighteen. She is a musical and courageous performer and led the orchestra during its most successful European Tour in 1993. She performs in a number of groups and has led the Ensemble Sartori which specialises in playing the Italian Romantic repertoire for mandolin. Michelle plays a mandolin made by Jacob Steifel, hand crafted from Australian timber.



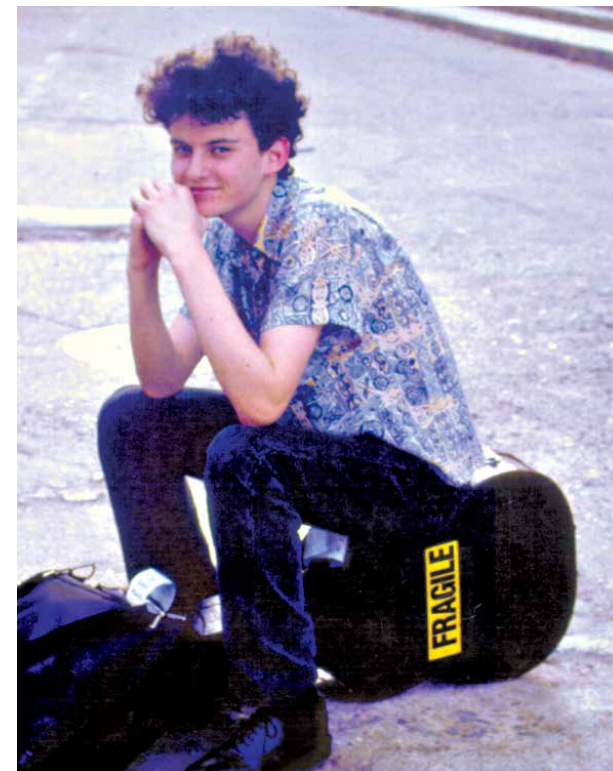
Kurt Jensen

is a Danish mandolin soloist who emigrated to Australia in 1989. Born in 1913, he began performing as a professional soloist at the age of 15. He has had a long musical career as violinist in the Tivoli Concert Orchestra and the Royal Orchestra in Copenhagen where he was soloist on the mandolin and a wide range of plucked instruments. Kurt has played the full range of music available for the mandolin from Vivaldi through to Hummel and Boulez. He has performed as soloist throughout Europe and Australia, in live performance and on radio. Since coming to Australia he has performed as soloist with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Melbourne Musicians, Zelman Memorial Symphony Orchestra, Melbourne Chamber Players, Melbourne Mandolin Orchestra and Concordia Mandolin and Guitar Ensemble as well as playing concerts as a soloist and as duo with the Paganini Duo. In Eupen Kurt won the first prize as the best soloist performing Fred Witt's Mandola Concerto. Kurt is playing a mandola made by the Italian luthier Luigi Emberger.



Slava

Grigoryan was born in Khazakstan in 1976. From seven years of age he was taught guitar by his father. At twelve he won one of the first music scholarships offered by St Michael's Grammar School and has exceeded their expectations by heading the class list in first year Music at Monash University while completing his



secondary schooling. Before he was fifteen, he had won awards in Australian and Japanese guitar competitions. Since joining the MMO at fourteen, he has performed as soloist on the orchestra's tours to Japan and Europe. He has made live broadcasts for 3MBS and the ABC. Slava's virtuosity has attracted international attention and he has been invited to appear at the 1995 International Guitar Festival of Great Britain. Slava plays a guitar made by the Spanish Luthier Juan Lopez Aguilarte.



Karla Drazenovic was born in Melbourne in 1976 and began learning violoncello with Peter Reilley at the age of ten. Since 1988 she has been a pupil of Henry Wenig. She has toured Europe and New Zealand with the Junior Strings of Melbourne and the Australian Youth Orchestra respectively and performs in the Geminiani Chamber Orchestra. She attended a master class with Douglas Cummings in 1992 and in the same year passed her A.Mus.A with distinction and was awarded the Lady Northcote Award. Karla often performs in eisteddfods as a solo performer and is a member of chamber groups. She plays a Warren-Fordham cello handcrafted from Australian timber.

MELBOURNE MANDOLIN ORCHESTRA

Mandolin 1 — Michelle Wright, Joan Harris, Jill Johnson, Mary Ebinger, Ina Postuma and Willy Green.

Mandolin 2 — Cassandra Azzaro, Andrew Russo, Judy John, Roberta Condie, Herman Mangold, Kon Euan Wong, Yevgeny Belenko

Mandola — Ann Roubos, Jinette De Gooijer, Terry Harris, Leon Brighthope

Mandoloncello — Adam Tate

Guitar — Slava Grigoryan, John McGregor, Danny Silver, Con Balalas, Sue Vincent, Owen Rolfe.

Double bass — Tony Hofmann

Percussion — Ben Van Den Acker

The Melbourne Mandolin Orchestra also appears on “The Marvellous World of George Dreyfus”.

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